



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Ricardo Encarnacion (619) 338-2180
Robert Venter (619) 338-2447

KEEP BACTERIA OFF YOUR HOLIDAY GUEST LIST *Safe Food Handling Tips from the Department of Environmental Health*

Thanksgiving is almost upon us and family and friends will come together to celebrate. Food safety is very important because large amounts of food are often prepared and served. Here are a few safety tips to prevent microscopic guests from joining your party.

- ❑ **PLAN: Plan ahead.** Decide how much food can be safely served. Take into account the cooking and refrigerator space. Thinking of defrosting a frozen turkey? Plan ahead for safe, slow thawing in the refrigerator. A large turkey requires at least 24 hours for every 5 pounds of weight. Get your meat thermometer ready for a busy day.
- ❑ **CLEAN: Wash your hands before and after handling food. Thoroughly rinse produce prior to use.** Wash and sanitize the counters, cutting boards and equipment before and after preparing your holiday feast.
- ❑ **SEPARATE: Keep produce separated from raw meat products.** Place turkey onto a plate or in a pan at the bottom of the refrigerator to prevent juices from dripping onto other foods while defrosting in the refrigerator. When the bird is defrosted it can remain refrigerated for 1-2 days before cooking. Try using separate cutting boards for meat and fruits or vegetables.
- ❑ **COOK: Cook turkey to 180°F and the stuffing to 165°F.** Use a meat thermometer to ensure bacteria safe temperatures are reached. The temperature of a whole turkey must reach 180°F in the innermost part of the thigh. The safest way to cook stuffing is separate from the bird. Germs can thrive in the stuffing ingredients if it is improperly cooked in the turkey. Leftovers should be reheated to 165°F before eating. Gravy should be reheated to a boil and leftovers, if heated, should be thoroughly reheated to 165° F.
- ❑ **CHILL: Keep cold foods at 41°F or less.** Check the temperature inside your refrigerator. If preparing foods ahead of time, refrigerate to minimize bacterial growth. Cut leftover turkey into small pieces, or slice. Refrigerate stuffing and turkey separately in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking.

For additional information go to www.usda.gov or call the Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854.

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1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 208 • SAN DIEGO, CA 92101